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ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P R 251735Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0844  
INFO RHMFISS/AFRICOM  
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0127  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0104  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0230  
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0239  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0140  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0094  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0125  
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0414  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0401  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0022  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0391  
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1059

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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C SSARDAR, MASHRAF, SLOPEZ, KWYCOFF  
PARIS FOR RKANEDA  
LONDON FOR PLORD  
AFRICOM FOR KOCH

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: MEETING WITH CAR PRESIDENT BOZIZE

REF: 09 BANGUI 0046

11. (SBU) On Friday, 20 February, the Ambassador called on President Bozize. The meeting was at Bozize's request. The Ambassador had not yet requested a meeting as Bozize had been in Bossangoa for a week of funeral ceremonies for his mother. Bozize began by asking the Ambassador's view of the Obama Administration's policy towards Africa. Noting that the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa had not yet been named, the Ambassador commented on Senator Obama's strong anti-corruption message during his visit to Kenya as well as Senator Biden's close questioning of all ambassadorial candidates on their support for human rights. Given that Obama is now President of the United States and Biden is now Vice President, the Ambassador replied that he was confident that the fight against corruption and the protection of human rights were likely to remain at the center of United States policy in Africa. Bozize then asked about the Ambassador's trip to Ndele, the evident purpose for the meeting.

12. (SBU) Ambassador recounted trip in detail, touching all of the points detailed in Bangui 0046. Bozize listened attentively but offered no comment. While taking care to avoid accusations, the Ambassador made clear his belief that the Central African Armed Forces had probably killed some twenty unarmed civilians in Sokoumba. Bozize asked for copies of the photos that the Ambassador had taken on site. (Prints and a CD of selected photos have been prepared.) As he had promised the Sultan of Ndele, Ambassador passed on, and endorsed, the Sultan's appeal that the President take immediate action to defuse the conflict between the Rounga and the Goula tribes before it spread across the Vakaga.

13. (SBU) Bozize expressed concern at the Ambassador's having traveled to an area where combat had taken place. He cited the case of the Doctors Without Borders employee who had been killed and noted that his government had been blamed. He further noted the Ambassador's previous travel to Obo in extreme southeastern CAR. Ambassador assured the President that he took no unnecessary chances but noted direct observation was the only way to separate fact from rumor. Ambassador further invited the President to accompany him on his next trip.

¶4. (SBU) Meeting closed with the Ambassador reminding President Bozize of the need to take urgent action on trafficking in persons issues so as to avoid the automatic cut off of U.S. assistance. (Ambassador left an Aide Memoire outlining the required legislation, etc.) Ambassador also reminded the President of previous conversations about the upcoming visit by CBS News and the Ambassador's request that the President designate a point of contact.

¶5. (SBU) As usual, the Ambassador was interviewed by the Central African television as he left the meeting. Ambassador used the opportunity to repeat his appeal that all Central Africans refrain from violence and support the peace accords.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: While President Bozize listened attentively to the account of the Ambassador's trip, as during previous meetings, it did not appear that he was fully seized of the implications. Similarly, there has been no follow up on the question of either trafficking in persons or even a simple, and potentially beneficial, matter such as assuring that the CBS visit go well.

¶7. (SBU) Since this visit, the news has only gotten worse and there still has been no public reaction by the Bozize government, leaving a media space that the armed rebels are starting to fill with their own press releases and a website.  
END COMMENT

COOK